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Economic and Social Council

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High-level segment

Provisional summary record of the 15th meeting (Chamber B)
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 30 June 2010, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Octavio Errázuriz (Vice-President) ..... (Chile)

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(c) Annual ministerial review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women (*continued*)

(d) Thematic discussion: Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and empowerment of women

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

(c) Annual ministerial review: Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women (*continued*) (E/2004/4-E/CN.6/2010/2; E/2010/47, 58, 59, 60-63, 65-67, 71, 75, 78, 80, 81, 92; E/2010/NGO/3, 5, 6, 10-18, 20, 22-25, 27, 28, 30-38, 40, 42-51, 53-56, 58, 59, 61, 63-65, 67-71, 75, 77-81, 85, 87 and 88)

(d) Thematic discussion: Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on gender equality and empowerment of women (E/2010/49, E/2010/4-E/CN.6/2010/2, E/2010/15 and Add.1 and E/2010/33)

1. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General for the fourth Annual Ministerial Review and for the current year's thematic discussion, said that much had changed since the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. For instance, women's access to employment opportunities had slowly increased; social safety nets and microcredit schemes had empowered women and alleviated poverty; women had greater access to land, education and health services; crimes involving violence against women were receiving more attention; and there had been slow but steady progress in the number of women holding seats in parliaments. A number of concerns remained, however, including the need to educate men and boys about women's human rights; the high number of women having low-paid or vulnerable jobs; the negative impact of the economic crisis, particularly on women; and the still inadequate representation of women in all spheres of economic and political decision-making.

2. The statistics concerning women's political representation were unacceptable, in that such representation was a linchpin for advancing gender equality. The achievement of internationally agreed development goals was severely compromised in societies where women and girls were not allowed to contribute equally. The challenges faced by the international community in that regard showed four trends, in particular. First, systemic weaknesses in the global economy had not been resolved, and economic recovery measures needed to be specifically designed to help women. Second, women were bearing the brunt of increased pressures from food insecurity, as they were among the first to be affected by price volatility. Third, the most severe impacts of climate change were experienced disproportionately by women. Fourth, humanitarian crises intensified gender inequalities and set back progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals.

3. The international community must overcome those challenges through policy interventions. Increased political commitment, strong leadership at all levels and concrete actions and deadlines were required in order to address the needs of women. Investing in women and girls had a multiplier effect: when women were granted the same rights and opportunities as men, a tremendous source of human potential was unleashed. The current session of the Council would serve the purpose of informing the international community of progress made in that arena and motivating all to work harder to advance the status of women throughout the world.

4. *A panel discussion on the topic of "The role of women in countries in special situations" followed, chaired by Mr. Octavio Errázuriz (Chile), Vice-President of the Council, and moderated by Ms. Carla Koppel (Director, Initiative for Inclusive Security). The moderator made a statement and introduced the panellists: Ms. Leymah Gbowee (Executive Director, Women in Peace and Security Network Africa); Ms. Frances Stewart (Director, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Department for International Development, University of Oxford); Mr. Jan Egeland (Director, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs); and Ms. Graciana del Castillo (Senior Research Scholar, Columbia University). Mr. Patrick Hayford (Director, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa) made a statement, on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General, Special Adviser on Africa and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States. The panellists made presentations. An interactive dialogue ensued, in which the delegations of the United States of America, Nepal, Indonesia, Argentina, Australia (on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum) and the Republic of Korea participated. Statements were made by the Observer for the European Union, the representative of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the representatives of the International Presentation Association and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The panellists*

responded to questions and comments raised. The moderator made concluding remarks and closed the panel discussion.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.